



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Comment Sought on Draft Judicial Ethics Advisory Opinion

*Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions invites comment on
a draft opinion providing guidance to judges on accepting small gifts*

SAN FRANCISCO—The California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions invites public comment on a draft advisory opinion discussing small value gifts that are sometimes offered to judges. The draft opinion clarifies that these tokens of esteem or appreciation, such as gift cards and baseball caps, are gifts under the Code of Judicial Ethics and subject to the unconditional bans on gifts from parties and gifts that create a perception of influence.

The draft opinion also provides an important analytical framework for judges to use when determining whether small value gifts that are not banned may be accepted under the ordinary social hospitality exception. The draft opinion advises that gifts of little or nominal value that are not otherwise banned may be accepted if they are ordinary by community standards, offered for social traditions or purposes, and hospitable in nature.

The draft opinion and invitation to comment are posted on the [committee's website](http://www.JudicialEthicsOpinions.ca.gov). The deadline for comment is August 8, 2014.

After considering the public's comments on the draft opinion, the committee will decide whether or not to publish an opinion in final form. Comments are due by August 8, 2014, and may be submitted in any of the following ways:

- Online using this [Comment Form](http://www.JudicialEthicsOpinions.ca.gov/itc); <http://www.JudicialEthicsOpinions.ca.gov/itc>;
- By email to Judicial.Ethics@jud.ca.gov; or
- By mailing comments to Ms. Nancy Black, Committee Counsel, The California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions, 350 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California 94102.

The committee will post on the CJEO website, at the close of the comment period, or after August 8, 2014, those public comments submitted with a statement that confidentiality is waived.

CJEO is an independent committee appointed by the Supreme Court to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. CJEO was established as part of the court's constitutional responsibility to guide the conduct of judges and judicial candidates (Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18, subd. (m)). In making appointments to serve on CJEO, the court selects members of the bench with a strong background in judicial ethics and diverse courtroom experience. The current twelve CJEO members are justices, judges, a commissioner, and a retired bench officer who have served in courts of various sizes throughout the state.

CJEO publishes formal opinions, issues confidential informal opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the California Code of Judicial Ethics and other authorities (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(e)(1)). CJEO acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and all other entities (rule 9.80(b)).

For more information about CJEO, visit the [CJEO website](#) and [view the members' page](#), call toll-free at 1-855-854-5366, or email Judicial.Ethics@jud.ca.gov.

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The Supreme Court established the Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. (Cal. Rules of Court, [rule 9.80](#).) CJEO publishes formal advisory opinions, issues confidential written opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the [California Code of Judicial Ethics](#) and other authorities. In providing its advisory opinions, the committee acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and all other entities. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(b).) The Supreme Court is responsible for adopting the Code of Judicial Ethics, which guides the conduct of judges on and off the bench (Cal. Const., Art. VI, § 18, subd. (m).)